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ABSTRACT

Although the New Zealand government is spending millions of dollars to teach the Maori language in preschool language nests and immersion primary schools, its language policies are unlikely to succeed because they do not address the perceived low social status of the language. A marketing paradigm outlines how language can be viewed as a product and promoted to a target audience along with appropriate distribution and price (costs in personal energy and potential ridicule). As with any product, the enhancement of a language's status can be planned; the first step is a situation analysis, in this case a survey of Maori usage and related public opinion. A 1990 survey of 225 New Zealand adults (14 percent Maori) found that although most respondents had little or no understanding of Maori, two-thirds agreed that the language has a place in contemporary New Zealand society. Support for this statement was higher among younger than older respondents. One-third of respondents (84 percent of Maoris and 25 percent of non-Maoris) were willing to make a personal effort for Maori language survival. In 1995, the declaration of Maori Language Year aimed to encourage Maori people to learn and use the language, celebrate the language's place in New Zealand history and society, and generate goodwill toward the language among the wider New Zealand population. The Year was celebrated by a large number of New Zealanders, and it appears that the public's passive tolerance of the language in contemporary society will allow its active and explicit promotion. Contains 11 references. (SV)

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Marketing the Maori Language

Rangi Nicholson

He kororia ki te Atua i runga rawa,
He maunga-a-rongo ki runga i te mata o te whenua,
He whakaaro pai ki nga tangata katoa.
E nga iwi, e nga reo, e nga mana, tena koutou,
tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Glory to God on high,
Peace on earth,
Goodwill to all people.
To the tribal representatives, voices of the people
and distinguished persons, greetings.

While the New Zealand Government is currently spending millions of dollars to teach the Maori language in preschool language nests, Maori total immersion primary schools, and elsewhere, its language policies are not likely to succeed because it has failed to promoted Maori among Maori and non- Maori to the extent that the language has a sufficiently good image. The results of a market research study and the promotion of the 1995 Maori Language Year indicate that the passive tolerance of the Maori language by New Zealanders in contemporary New Zealand society will allow a more active and explicit promotion of the Maori language.

Maori today account for about 13% of the population in New Zealand. The Maori language has been a minority language for over 130 years. Prior to World War II the Maori language was the first language of Maori who largely lived in rural areas. After 1945 large scale urban migration occurred that led to a breakdown in the transmitting of Maori from one generation to another. Maori children began to be raised as monolingual speakers of English (Chrisp, 1997, p. 101). This is very significant because at this time about 60% of the Maori population was under the age of 20. In a linguistic survey completed in the 1970s, it was clear that less than 20% of Maori could speak the Maori language. Despite intensive Maori language revitalization efforts in the 1970s and 1980s, including the kohanga reo or preschool language nests and language radio stations, the latest Maori Language Commission survey conducted in 1995 shows that the number of fluent adult Maori speakers appears to have decreased considerably to about 10,000. Social changes in New Zealand's history, reflected in urbanization, television, industrialization, and intercultural marriages have all

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contributed to the Maori language not being spoken in homes (Waitangi Tribunal Report, 1986, p. 16). The low social status of the language in the eyes of its speakers (Crowley, 1984) and the general New Zealand community has also been a factor. In the 1990s Maori still remains an endangered language. Arguably, successful Maori language revitalization will depend, at least in part, on the attitudes and commitment of Maori speakers as a whole to maintaining and revitalizing the language in the home, in the neighborhood, in the community, and beyond. There is a real need to market the language to lift its social status and to encourage a higher level of commitment from the largely elderly group of native speakers and younger second language learners as well as the general population (Nicholson & Garland, 1991, p. 395).

Marketing paradigm

Cooper (1985) outlines how language can be viewed as a ***product*** and combined with the appropriate ***promotion*** to the correct target audience along with appropriate ***distribution*** and ***price*** (costs in personal energy, potential ridicule from family and friends, and so forth). Language can be planned in a marketing framework to enhance its status. Like any product or service, its enhancement can be planned and the first step in marketing a language, in this case the Maori language, is the so-called situation analysis. Stated more simply, a situation analysis is a review of the current status and circumstances for a product or service. For the Maori language this will involve answering questions such as how many New Zealanders speak the language fluently, how many understand it, who are these people, where do they live, where, when, and with whom do they use the Maori language, and so forth. But equally important is to ascertain New Zealanders' attitudes to the Maori language and its usage, for only when the magnitude of public support or public opposition to the advancement of the Maori language is known can the Maori Language Commission and other Maori language planning agencies, including tribal agencies, correctly formulate their marketing strategies for revitalizing the language. "Like all marketers, language planners must recognize, identify, or design products which the potential consumer will find attractive" (Cooper, 1989, p. 73). Given the situation analysis of Maori language to date, there does not appear as yet to be Maori language products that Maori are finding sufficiently attractive to buy that will change the language's endangered status.

Grin (1990) believes that the first goal of language policy should be to improve considerably the image of a minority language:

> the minority language needs to have a sufficiently good image. Any language policy that provides money, but avoids sincere commitment to boosting the image of the language, is therefore likely to fail. There seems to be no way around this: for a minority language to survive, its image must be positive. (Grin, 1990, p. 71)

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It can be argued that while the New Zealand Government is currently spending millions of dollars on kohanga reo, preschool language nests, kura kaupapa Maori total immersion primary schools, as well as other initiatives, its language policies are not likely to succeed because it has not promoted Maori among Maori and non-Maori to the extent that the language has a sufficiently good image.

The Welsh Language Board has recognized the importance of good public relations and effective marketing, namely, "marrying the Board's strategy with the wishes and activities of most of the Welsh populace" (Welsh Language Board, 1989, p. 2). A marketing program is seen as an indispensable part of any strategy for the future of the Welsh language. It is also an indispensable part of any strategy for the Maori language.

Market research study

This section draws heavily on an article written by the author and Ron Garland entitled "New Zealanders' Attitudes to the Revitalization of the Maori Language" (Nicholson & Garland, 1991). In 1990 a nationwide mail survey of 225 New Zealand adults' opinions was held about the Maori language's role in contemporary society and the extent to which New Zealanders will commit themselves to fostering the language. Two specific research objectives were as follows:

- to ascertain the extent to which Maori is spoken and understood by New Zealand adults and thereby confirm or question previous estimates of competency in the Maori language.
- to gain insights into New Zealanders' attitudes to the current plight of the Maori language, its place in today's world and the level of personal commitment of New Zealanders to the Maori language. (Nicholson & Garland, 1991, p. 397)

The data collection procedure used for this research was a nationwide mail survey of a representative sample of New Zealanders aged 18 years and over randomly selected from the electoral rolls. The survey instrument was a questionnaire using closed questions, that is, it did not seek respondents' reasons for their stated answer. The response rate was 59%. The sex distribution was 53% male and 47% female while the age distribution was 18-34 years, 27%; 35-49 years, 34%; 50 years and over, 39%. Maori respondents represented 14% of the sample, non- Maori (mostly European) 86%; regional distribution was Auckland (the largest city, 820,000 population), 22%; the remainder of the upper North island, 22%; lower North Island, 22%; South Island, 34%.

As expected, most respondents claimed little or no understanding of the Maori language. However, 3% of the sample listed themselves as fluent in Maori, which if correct and extrapolated to the New Zealand adult population yields approximately 73,000 fluent speakers. This extrapolated figure is highly likely to be greatly inflated because it is suspected that a higher proportion of Maori

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speakers than non-Maori speakers would have completed and returned the questionnaire and it is possible that the self definition of fluency in Maori could have been overrated by some claimants. From the survey it is clear that the initial revitalization of the Maori language lies with the Maori community; all the fluent speakers of Maori were Maori and 88% of these fluent speakers were aged 50 years or older.

Table 1: The place of the Maori language in New Zealand today

Does Maori language have a place in modern society?	*Total Sample*	*Age (in years)*		
		18-34	*35-49*	*50 plus*
Yes	67%	75%	66%	60%
No	33%	25%	34%	40%
Sample size	225	61	77	87

$c^2 = 3.4$, df = 2, r = 0.18

Two thirds of the sample agreed that the Maori language has a place in contemporary New Zealand society as demonstrated in Table 1. It is interesting to note the clear trend of inverse relationship between age and support for the language. Two thirds of the respondents acknowledged that the language has a place in contemporary society and there is considerably more support for this position among younger New Zealanders. If the young adults of today continue to embrace this attitude of support into their old age then the outlook for the Maori language becomes more optimistic. No significant differences were noted for the other variables of ethnic background, region, and sex.

Of course, it is one thing to support an idea or situation but another to actually do something about it. Willingness to make a personal commitment to ensure the survival of the Maori language saw nearly one third of the sample reply in the affirmative as shown in Table 2. Taken at face value, this result would equate to 782,000 New Zealand adults having at least some commitment to maintaining the Maori language. If we take the pessimistic view of all non-respondents being negative towards Maori language revitalization, this equates to 440,000 New Zealand adults (out of a possible 2,444,000) having at least some commitment to ensuring the future of the Maori language.

Table 2: Willingness to make a personal effort for Maori language survival

Willing to make a personal effort?	*Total Sample*	*Age (in years)*[1]			*Ethnic Background*[2]	
		18-34	*35-49*	*50 plus*	*Maori*	*Non- Maori*
Yes	32%	37%	32%	29%	84%	25%
No	68%	63%	68%	71%	16%	75%
Sample size	225	61	77	87	31	194

1. $c^2 = 0.95$, df = 2, r > 0.30 2. $c^2 = 137.73$, df = 1, r = 0.00

As expected, Maori respondents showed a more positive attitude to their language's revitalization with 84% stating that they would be willing to make a personal effort in this regard. This percentage equates to 180,000 Maori adults (At the 1986 Census, 405,000 people listed themselves as of Maori origin or descent; 216,000 of these people were aged 18+ years). Age and gender appeared to have little bearing on personal commitment to the Maori language. However, the questionnaire did not specify what sort of personal effort would be required, but given the usual biases attached to surveying in general and mail surveys in particular, it would be wise for policymakers to accept a lower level of national commitment to revitalizing the Maori language than stated here.

Maori Language Year

The Maori Language Commission was established by the New Zealand Government in 1987. Promoting Maori as a living language is one of its major tasks. While the Commission initially undertook a number of promotional activities, sustained marketing of the language had been difficult owing to financial constraints. The notion of a theme year came into being as a result of these financial or budgetary constraints and also to assist an increase in status as well as levels of knowledge and use of the Maori language (Chrisp, 1997, p. 101). The Commission focused on three main goals for Maori Language Year.

1. to encourage Maori people to learn and use the Maori language in various daily activities
2. to celebrate the place of the Maori language in New Zealand history and modern society
3. to generate and/or harness, and actively employ, goodwill towards the Maori language within the wider New Zealand population.

It was acknowledged at the beginning that any results in terms of these goals may not be immediately evident but hopefully would emerge in the future. Maori Language Year was seen as a catalyst.

It was, and still is, very difficult to judge the success or failure of the first goal, namely, whether more Maori are using more Maori language in various daily activities. One of the problems is that there was no baseline data about the amount and volume of Maori language used immediately prior to 1995 (Chrisp, 1997, p. 104). It can, however, be agreed that Maori Language Year did create greater opportunities for using Maori. A considerable number of Maori seminars or schools of learning were held by Maori family and tribal groups. Useful discussions on intergenerational language transmission took place at these gatherings, and special Maori Language Year events and activities provided opportunities for using Maori language.

The second goal focused on celebrating the place of the Maori language in New Zealand history and modern society. A wide range of celebrations occurred. However, while celebrations and a positive environment for language

revitalization are important, what is vital is that more Maori choose to speak Maori in their homes, neighborhoods, schools, and other domains.

The third goal was generating and harnessing as well as actively employing goodwill towards the Maori language within the wider New Zealand population. The Commission sought to establish relationships in the commercial and political worlds as well as with Government agencies and the media. Commercial sponsorship meant that the amount of money to support Maori language activities and events was greatly increased. Commercial organizations began to see the benefits of targeting the Maori market using the Maori language. Senior politicians of all the political parties, including the Prime Minister, discussed the Maori language and its contribution to New Zealand society. Some Government agencies actively supported the promotion. Again, all these developments, including greater media coverage, assisted the creation of a more positive linguistic environment. Fishman (1991, p. 245), however, has described such efforts as "atmosphere effects" in that they do little to focus on the major issue of intergenerational language transmission. One of the challenges of the future, however, is to maintain and extend the goodwill created during the Maori Language Year (Chrisp, 1997, p. 105). In the medium to long term it is still possible that the level of goodwill among the wider population can translate into important political and financial support.

Conclusion

From the results of the market research study and the Maori Language Year promotion, it appears that the passive tolerance of New Zealanders to the presence of the Maori language in contemporary New Zealand society will allow active and explicit promotion. While Maori Language Year in 1995 was celebrated by a large number of New Zealanders, sustained longer term marketing of the language needs to be aimed at the Maori community. Fishman comments that it is crucial for language revitalization that priorities are identified in order "to focus the meager resources that are available in as judicious a way as possible" (Fishman, 1990, p. 18). Given the importance of the language being passed on in the home, neighborhood, and community, marketing intergenerational transmission could be an early priority. Older native speakers and younger language learners, including parents who send their children to preschool language nests and total immersion primary schools, could be encouraged to transmit the Maori language. Younger people could be encouraged to become more committed to learning it so that the number of fluent speakers is lifted quickly. It can be argued that Maori language radio and television stations could play an important role in marketing the language among Maori families. Introducing a marketing perspective to the active promotion of the Maori language would attempt to take advantage of existing Maori support first.

Another possible early priority is to market intensively on a national scale "the hoped-for benefits" (Fishman, 1990, p. 18) of Maori language revitalization. Such a program could attempt to convince Maori and non-Maori that New

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Zealand's most positive future will depend on successful revitalization of the language. Boosting its image is also important (Grin, 1990), particularly if the investment already made by policymakers is to result in the 'hoped for benefits.' Undoubtedly, higher social status for the Maori language together with effective language support programs could act as powerful incentives for transmitting the language from one generation to another as well as encouraging young people to use it (Muhlhausler, 1987).

While the Maori Language Commission is well placed to assist with the development of national Maori language marketing strategies, tribal councils and tribal language commissions will need to plan strategically the marketing of the Maori language at local or regional levels. Raising the image of the language will be important if those dollars already expended by the government and tribal bodies towards language revitalization are to be cost effective.

The United States invented the mass-consumer culture. Some of the top U.S. brand names are recognized worldwide: Coca-Cola, Kodak, McDonalds, or IBM. In marketing Maori language intergenerational transmission, or the hoped-for benefits, it will be necessary that any advertising or promotional material is liked by Maori and non-Maori. It must appeal to the Maori or non-Maori heart or emotions. The deft use of humor is a powerfully effective means of marketing (Garnsey, 1997). In the cultural marketplace what we could end up selling is hope: hope that an endangered cultural treasure will be saved, that an endangered language can be revitalized, and that Maori and non-Maori can dwell peacefully together in New Zealand—affirming and valuing one another's languages and cultures.

Kia ora ano tatou katoa.
Greetings to us all.

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